

Leading Your Community Through the Gateway to Prevention

Help prevent child abuse and neglect in your community. Use the following innovative ideas as starting points for planning activities to help raise awareness and protect children. While some of these activities are specific to Child Abuse Prevention Month, many can be used year-round.

Hold a Blue Ribbon Campaign. In 1989, Bonnie W. Finney of Virginia tied a blue ribbon to the antenna of her van. When asked about it, she told people the tragic story of the abuse of her grandchildren, and the resulting death of her grandson. Since then, millions of people across the country have participated in Blue Ribbon campaigns by wearing the ribbons and getting involved in community activities to remind people that they can help prevent child abuse in their communities.

Ms. Finney originally chose blue to remind herself of the bruised bodies of her grandchildren. In recent years, some organizations have chosen to reinvent the symbol using a strength-based approach. Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, a State chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America, uses the blue ribbon to celebrate “Blue Ribbon Parents,” “Blue Ribbon Kids,” or “Blue Ribbon Communities” that find new and innovative ways to support families.

Involve local faith communities. A local church in Arlington, Virginia, hosted a Bishop’s Summit on Children and Violence. They invited the faith community and general public to learn about and help prevent child abuse and family violence.

Volunteer at an organization providing family support services. In many communities across the country, volunteers are making significant contributions to ensuring the healthy development of children in need. In New Mexico, AmeriCorps volunteers provide one-on-one support, mentoring, and other wrap-around services to pregnant and parenting teens enrolled in their GRADS program. The program is designed to help the teens graduate, improve their parenting skills, and foster self-sufficiency.

Team up with a local professional or semi-professional sports franchise. Prevent Child Abuse America has partnered with the National Basketball Association (NBA) for the last 15 years to raise awareness during Child Abuse Prevention Month, holding a national press event as well as local activities at games across the country. For example, the Partners in Prevention Campaign Planning Committee in Washington, DC, worked with the NBA to hold a professional basketball game (Washington Wizards) that recognized Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Invite a local celebrity or feature a children’s cartoon character. Raising a Healthy Child, Inc., in Tallahassee, Florida, hosted a free event featuring Spider-Man™. The event included a Spider-Man skit, autographs, photos with Spider-Man, Spider-Man comic books about child abuse prevention, face painting, games, and snow cones. Resource information about child abuse prevention and counselors were available for families. (To order a Spider-Man comic book about child abuse prevention, see <http://pcaamerica.channing-bete.com>.)

Involve men and fathers. The Hillsdale Child Abuse Council in Minnesota kicked off its county-wide “Real Men Rock” shaken baby public awareness campaign with an ad campaign showing local fathers nurturing and rocking their babies. Participants included a local emergency medical technician and a teacher.

Encourage community members to celebrate their own heroes. The New Hampshire Children's Trust Fund, New Hampshire's Community-Based Family Resource and Support (CBFRS) grantee, advertised the opportunity to make a contribution to the trust fund to honor a mother or someone else special to the donor. The message read, "When you make a gift to the New Hampshire Children's Trust Fund in the name of someone you love, your gift will not only honor her, but also help other women become strong, effective mothers, too."

Use a clever gimmick to attract the community's attention. The Kalamazoo County Child Abuse Council in Michigan sponsored a Life Savers[®] campaign. More than 200 community volunteers handed out Life Savers[®] candies on corners or in stores in exchange for donations. The funds went to support ongoing child abuse prevention programs.

Honor the community's culture. The child abuse prevention program for the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe hosted a conference called "Honor Our Children, Honor Our Heritage." The conference included a spiritual run/walk and a pow-wow ("Honor Our Children, Drum Out Child Abuse.") Speakers from other reservations were invited to talk about child abuse prevention. (For more information on this and other prevention activities for Native American communities, see the listing for National Indian Child Welfare Association in the Resource Directory, page 60.)

Distribute a resource guide for parents. Many local Boy Scout troops distribute the booklet, "How to Protect Your Children from Child Abuse: A Parent's Guide," among their members as part of the Boy Scout Guidebook for youth.

The National Exchange Club Foundation (see Resource Directory, page 59) distributes "Time Out Teddy" brochures with insights on positive and effective childrearing skills. The brochure is also available in Spanish.

Prevent Child Abuse America also offers a variety of parenting publications through its Web site at <http://pcaamerica.channing-bete.com>.

Involve local businesses. Community business owners in a suburb of Chicago were asked to contribute a child's-sized white or blue T-shirt with the business logo on the front. The T-shirts were attached to a clothesline that was threaded around a prominent building to draw attention to Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Indiana's CBFRS grantee printed public service announcements and the child abuse hotline number on thousands of grocery bags used by a statewide grocery chain.

For Child Abuse Prevention Month 2002, Prevent Child Abuse America's Minnesota chapter, the Family Support Network, was chosen by Sidney's Restaurant as its "Children's Charity of Choice." In each of the restaurant's five locations, Sidney's included information about the Family Support Network in its menus and created a display at which customers could make donations.

Vermont kicked off Child Abuse Prevention Month with a cake-cutting ceremony. The cake, donated by Vermont-based Ben & Jerry's, served approximately 250 people. The first piece went to a child.

Involve local schools. The Exchange Club Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse of the Trident Area, South Carolina, has developed a report card insert to show parents a positive approach to dealing with disappointing grades. The inserts are available in bulk by calling the National Exchange Club Foundation. (See Resource Directory, page 59.)

Engage local legislators. The Children's Trust Fund in Missouri distributed lapel pins to all members of the State legislature with a card that read, "April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Missouri's children are pinning their hopes on you."

Take your message on the road. In Puerto Rico, CBFRS funds were used to develop two mobile outreach buses that delivered educational materials and training during Child Abuse Prevention Month. Service providers on board helped community members determine where and how to receive additional services. The buses attracted attention through music and popular entertainment.

Many communities also use variations of the following "tried and true" activities to recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month and focus attention on child abuse prevention throughout the year. Make one of these ideas your own:

- ✦ Host an awards' breakfast or luncheon to recognize key individuals and organizations working to prevent child abuse.
- ✦ Submit a press release or feature story to your local newspaper or TV/radio station.
- ✦ Offer a speakers' bureau.
- ✦ Disseminate calendars of State or local child abuse prevention activities. Use local children's artwork to illustrate them.
- ✦ Seek Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamations by mayors and local councils.
- ✦ Spread the word on bus placards and billboards or through television and radio PSAs.
- ✦ Display literature on child abuse prevention at local libraries, or ask the library to develop a reading list on child abuse and where help can be found.
- ✦ Develop a child abuse prevention exhibit at a local shopping mall.
- ✦ Celebrate families with a festival or picnic.
- ✦ Hold an essay or poster contest for school children.
- ✦ Organize a children's parade.
- ✦ Sponsor a "Kids' Day at the Zoo."
- ✦ Host parent support groups on prevention topics. Contact Circle of Parents and Parents Anonymous[®] Inc. for more information about such groups. (See the Resource Directory, page 59.)
- ✦ Offer a workshop or conference on child abuse prevention or positive parenting.
- ✦ Fly Children's Memorial Flags in prominent locations. (Available from the Child Welfare League of America—see the Resource Directory, page 59.)
- ✦ Hold a candlelight vigil for victims of child abuse.